



NEWS

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2nd District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2009

Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-974-2222
James Bolden 213-200-5314

RIDLEY-THOMAS TOUTS SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF COUNTYWIDE 'GIFTS FOR GUNS' PROGRAM

*Over 3,853 dangerous guns were voluntarily surrendered as part of the
program that originated in the Second District City of Compton*

LOS ANGELES COUNTY – Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today applauded Sheriff Lee Baca's announcement of the collection of 3,853 dangerous firearms by the county's "Gift for Guns" program, which originated from a program implemented in Compton.

The program encourages the voluntary surrender of any firearms – no questions asked – in exchange for gift certificates redeemable at Ralphs, Vons, Best Buy, Stater Brothers and Target.

During a recent eight-week countywide collection drive, the Second Supervisorial District's community response to getting guns off the streets exceeded expectations. A total of 819 guns were turned in at facilities staffed by sheriff's personnel from Compton, Lennox, Century and Marina Del Rey.

"I'm proud to say that 'Gifts for Guns' was piloted and refined in the Second District," said the Supervisor, who provided funding to expand the program in his district. As part of a 2009 holiday collection in the communities of Compton and Lennox over 1,800 guns and 3,700 separate rounds of ammunition were received by the Sheriff's Department. "Based on the program's success, we were able to implement the voluntary eight-week gun surrender program countywide."

Collaborating with the sheriff's department in December to sponsor a holiday Gifts for Guns program were among Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' first initiatives designed to improve public safety in the Second District.

"Gun violence diminishes the quality of life for everyone," the supervisor said. "We must go beyond rhetoric and symbolic measures and tackle this issue in a measured, results-based approach, and no longer pursue quick fixes to a long standing problem."

While the Gifts for Guns program has proved to be a success, the Supervisor emphasized that a variety of public safety programs and initiatives are needed. The County is currently developing a Countywide Gang Violence Reduction Plan, with four pilot sites, two of which are in the Harbor Gateway and Florence-Firestone areas.

The Supervisor stressed the need for creating alternatives, such as employment opportunities for youth.

"While we clearly understand that there is a great need for suppression, I strongly believe that we must be more creative when it comes to prevention, focus more on the front end, rather than rehabilitation," he said.

#